

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 002478

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/02/2015

TAGS: PREL PTER SY LE TU

SUBJECT: SUSTAINING PRESSURE ON SYRIA ON UNSCR 1559:

TURKEY DEMARCHE

REF: STATE 78006

(U) Classified by Political Counselor John Kunstadter, E.O. 12958, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: We made reftel points to Turkish MFA Middle East Department Head Bozay April 29. GOT is awaiting a full UN report before coming to any conclusions about Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. The MFA issued a flaccid April 27 statement welcoming Syria's withdrawal announcement. The statement made no mention of Hizbulah, nor of the need for militias to disarm. The MFA claims it considers Syrian non-interference in Lebanese elections important. The Turkey/Syria FTA is on hold; the GOT is using progress of the Syria/EU Association Agreement as a guide. End Summary.

Turkey Awaiting UN Report

¶2. (C) Turkey's MFA issued a flaccid statement on April 27 welcoming Syria's announcement that it had withdrawn from Lebanon in compliance with UNSCR 1559. The statement said Turkey hopes Lebanese elections "will be held in an environment enabling the Lebanese people to freely exercise their political will."

¶3. (C) MFA Middle East Dept. Head Bozay said the MFA is awaiting a full UN report before coming to any conclusions about whether Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon is complete. He said this is reflected in the MFA's 27 April statement's wording that Turkey "hopes" the UN will confirm Syrian withdrawal claims.

¶4. (C) Bozay claims Turkey has the "same understanding" as the U.S. on the importance of Syrian non-interference in upcoming Lebanese elections. He claimed to have met with "other institutions" (meaning core institutions of the State) and said they also share this understanding.

No Mention of Hizbulah

¶5. (C) We noted that the April 27 announcement did not mention Hizbulah, nor even the need for militias to disarm. Bozay tried to explain this away as Turkey not wanting to get into Lebanon's "internal affairs" and not wanting to give Hizbulah "publicity." Asked about Syrian and Iranian support for Hizbulah, he countered that although Turkey is "not happy" with Hizbulah, "you (the U.S.) are the ones" who should pressure Hizbulah. Bozay said that although Turkey always urges Syria to oppose terrorism, they never explicitly mention Hizbulah because "the Syrians will deny it."

Turkey/Syria FTA on Hold

¶6. (C) We again urged that Turkey not ratify the free trade agreement with Syria Erdogan agreed to during his December 2004 visit to Damascus. Bozay said the agreement is on hold, and that Turkey is watching what the EU does on its proposed association agreement with Syria as a guide on proceeding with the FTA. The agreement was to have been ratified immediately upon Erdogan's return, he said, but was not due to pressure from the U.S. and EU.

¶7. (C) Asked about media reports regarding efforts to expand Turkey's Cilvegozu border gate with Syria, Bozay predicted that "technical and economic problems" would prevent it from proceeding.

EDELMAN